

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MUSCAT 1549

ATHENS FOR RTDO

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: BENE, MU
SUBJECT: NEW SPORTS CENTER FOR OMAN

REF A(A) MUSCAT A-54, (B) STATE 2594608,95-)

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. OLYMPIC SPORTS CENTERSFOR MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS IS MOVING FROM THE REALM OF SPECULATION TO SERIOUS PLANNING. PLOT OF LAND NEAR THE COAST AND OPPOSITE NEW HOUSING COLONY OF MEDINAT QABOOS HAS ALREADY BEEN RESERVED FOR THE COMPLEX. WE WERE INFORMED BY MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS THAT OUTDOOR STADIUM MAY BE MADE EVEN BIGGER THAN 30,000 SEATS IN ORDER TO ACCOMMODATE FUTURE POPULATION GROWTH IN CAPITAL. INDOOR ATHLETIC HALL, SWIMMING POOL, HOUSING FOR ATHLETES, CLUBS, AND RESTAURANTS ARE ALSO ENVISAGED. TOTAL COST FOR COMPLEX WILL BE AT LEAST\$60 MILLION AND PROBABLY MUC GREATER.

2. DIRECTOR GENERAL OF YOUTH AFFAIRS, ABDULLA SAID AL-BALUCHI (P.O. BOX 211, MUSCAT, SULTANATE OF OMAN), HAS INFORMED US THAT HE WOULD WELCOME PROPOSAL BY A MAJOR AMERICAN ARCHITECTURAL FIRM AND THAT REPRESENTATIVES
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OF THIS FIRM SHOULD BE PREPARED TO VISIT OMAN.

3.SWE UNDERSTAND THAT PROJECT WILL BE HANDLED BY MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS ON A NEGOTIATED CONTRACT BASIS AND WILL NOT BE PUT TO INTERNATIONAL TENDER. SEVEN FIRMS ALREADY IN OMAN HAVE BEEN INVITED TO MAKE FEASIBILITY STUDIES. FUNDS FOR STADIUM HAVE NOT BEEN PROVIDED IN FIVE YEAR DEVELOPMENT

PLAN; OMANIS ARE PRESENTLY SEEKING FINANCING FROM NEIGHBORING ARAB STATES. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT FUNDS WILL BE AVAILABLE BEFORE THE MIDDLE OF 1978, AND CONSTRUCTION MIGHT NOT START UNTIL 1979. END UNCLASSIFIED.

4. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. WE ARE SURPRISED THAT THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS HAS LEFT AN OPENING FOR AMERICAN COMPANIES. DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF SPORTS COMPLEX WAS ORIGINALLY TO BE ENTIRELY HANDLED BY FIRMS ALREADY BASED IN OMAN. THE OMANIS AT FIRST ENVISAGED THAT ONLY CONSTRUCTION FIRMS WITH POWERFUL LOCAL SPONSORS SUCH AS TAYLOR-WOODROW, J&P, OMAN SHAPOORJI, WIMPEY, TARMAC, W.J. TOWELL, AND YAHYA-COSTAIN WOULD BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE PROJECT. END LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.

5. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. COMMENT: THE STADIUM HAS ALREADY AROUSED MISGIVINGS AMONG SOME HIGHER OMANI OFFICIALS BECAUSE IT WOULD BE TERRIBLY EXPENSIVE AND TOTALLY UNNECESSARY. THE PRESENT POLICE STADIUM (20,000 SEATS) IS USED ONLY SELDOM. SULTAN QABOOS HIMSELF AND DEPUTY MINISTERS OF DEFENSE SAYYID FAHAR ARE GIVING MAIN IMPETUS TO PROJECT. IF NOT CAREFULLY MANAGED, THE SPORTS COMPLEX COULD BECOME NOTORIOUS AS YET ANOTHER EXTRAVAGANT AND DUBIOUS PROJECT WHICH IS BEYOND OMAN'S ABILITY TO AFFORD. SIZER

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